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211639Z Nov 04

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 003984

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CAIRO FOR AMB. SCHLICHER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/20/2014

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT SUPPORTS SECRETARY' POWELL'S INTERVENTION
AT SHARM; LOOKS FORWARD TO PARIS CLUB DECISION ON DEBT

REF: STATE 246759

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador briefed FM Shaykh Dr. Mohammed November 21 on developments on Iraqi issues in advance of the FM's departure for the Sharm Al Sheikh regional conference. The Ambassador secured GOK support for Secretary Powell's conference intervention and reconfirmed

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Kuwait's intent to move forward on debt reduction for Iraq. He also briefed the FM on military efforts in Falluja. Dr. Mohammed confirmed GOK support for the Sharm communique and informed the Ambassador of a Russian proposal that seemed to be at odds with conference objectives. End Summary.

GOK Set for Sharm; Will attend Interior Minister Conference

2. (U) In a November 21 meeting, the Ambassador raised the Secretary's objectives for the Sharm al Sheikh regional

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conference with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. Dr. Mohammed confirmed the GOK's support for the themes to be raised by the Secretary as well as acceptance of the final draft of the conference communique. Commenting on the follow-up mechanism mentioned in the U.S. presentation, Dr. Mohammed informed the Ambassador that Iran had already invited Interior Ministers to a November 30 conference in Tehran which the GOK will attend. He added that Iran is maintaining an active interest in Iraq, behind which he believes are two overriding goals: the eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, and an attempt to be viewed as a full equal to the G8 and other concerned countries. He suspects that Iran is delighted to be included in a meeting with G8 countries and looks to such a forum to help deflect attention from its nuclear program.

What's Russia Doing?

3. (C) Dr. Mohammed advised the Ambassador that the Russian Ambassador had just delivered a slightly confusing letter from FM Lavrov, which was reportedly also conveyed to other governments, suggesting that "all major political parties participate in the Sharm conference, including the opposition." (Note: It was not clear whether the Russians wanted new participants at Sharm or involved in some follow-up forum. End Note.) The letter also mentioned the need to establish a "collective monitoring mechanism" for holding meetings between the IIG and political groups. Dr. Mohammed said he questioned the Russians on what they meant by opposition -- Chalabi, Al-Sadar, Zargawi, and terrorists? He then asked the Ambassador for the U.S. views on this proposal. The Ambassador commented that the French had previously flouted the bad idea of opposition participation at Sharm, a notion that that was quickly rebuffed. He added that the Sharm communique focuses on the neighbors' group and stressed the importance of Iraqis running Iraq with the support, not interference, of its neighbors and other parties.

Kuwait Waiting for a Paris Club Decision

4. (C) The Ambassador then briefed Dr. Mohammed on the state of play of Paris Club negotiations. He reported agreement on the amount and timing of debt reductions, noting that Russia was the lone hold out. He informed Dr. Mohammed that Presidents Bush and Putin were currently in Chile and the issue could come up there. The Ambassador told Dr. Mohammed that it would give momentum to the Sharm conference if the GOK could make a public announcement on offering debt reduction to the IIG on terms comparable to Paris Club terms, with or without the Russians. Dr. Mohammed stated the GOK is on record as favoring substantial debt reduction for Iraq once the Paris Club reaches a decision. He further explained that implementation would require ratification by Parliament, but he did not anticipate any problems.

15. (C) On other Iraq issues, the Ambassador briefed Dr. Mohammed on the November 20 visit of General Abizaid. Insurgents remain active and their intimidation campaign is effective and ubiquitous. Nonetheless, it is possible for elections to take place in January 2005, a step that would lend further credibility to the IIG. Dr. Mohammed welcomed the update and expressed dismay at what he considered a failing public diplomacy effort. He said Arab audiences needed to see more footage of "nasty stuff" such as weapons caches and bomb factories. Scenes of destroyed houses, corpses, and U.S. forces injuring unarmed Iraqis are detrimental to U.S. interests.

16. (U) Also present were Director of the MFA International Organizations Department Ambassador Abdullah A. Al-Murad, who will accompany Dr. Mohammed to Sharm al Sheikh, and MFA Director of the Americas' Department Khalid Al-Babtain.

17. (U) Baghdad: Minimize considered.

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LeBaron